A Study In Seduction:

An Analysis Of What The Concept Encompasses & A Discussion Of It In The Context Of Enlightenment Thought As Seen In Mozart's Opera, *Don Giovanni*.

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Human beings are creatures that like to be seduced. But do we really know what seduction is? This is an elusive question, one that has plagued artists and scholars for centuries. Once thought to be a diabolical tool shrouded in mystery and magic, it was avoided and feared. In the early 17th century, a Spanish poet incarnated in theatrical form the myth of a celebrated lover into the figure that we know today as Don Juan. Almost one hundred and fifty years later, in 1787, after hundreds of adaptations into various languages, most notably *Dom Juan* (Molière), *The Libertine* (Shadwell), and *Il Convitato di Pietra* (Goldoni), Wolfgang A. Mozart and Lorenzo da Ponte revitalized the story of the handsome, robust, virile, wealthy, young aristocrat in the form of *Don Giovanni*.

One of the most clearly articulated subjects in Western tradition, Don Giovanni is considered the definitive personification of seduction, and whose allure is specifically exposed in the realm of sexuality in this Baroque opera. Due to this aspect, it presents an intricate dynamic into the discussion of subject-object seduction in Western society: the relation of the subject to the society in which he operates and the relationship that the society has upon the subject. The figure of whom literature and society is most wary, and towards whom the strongest moral critiques are cast, is the seducer. Mozart and da Ponte created a work that demonstrates a myriad of sexualities and sexual relations that are so intricately connected with one another that it is often difficult to isolate one relationship from the social system in which they thrive. They achieve this not only through showing us one facet of this seducer's character, but also through third person narrative and observational accounts on the part of the society in which the protagonist operates. *Don Giovanni* is more than a tragic opera which poses ethical dilemmas; it is the declaration

of an individual's independence from its suffocative surroundings under the auspices of Enlightenment thought.

In this study, I will look at four distinct themes that deal with the relationship of subject-object seduction and its implications for the protagonist. Firstly, it is necessary to establish who the protagonist is, and develop the relationship with his valet, Leporello. This psychological interdependence is one that permeates the text and allows for a deeper comprehension of the protagonist's impulses. Secondly, alternative methods of seduction occur, manifested in a myriad of male sexualities. Don Ottavio's approach to women and society is much different that Don Giovanni's; why is his seductive methodology acceptable within the aristocratic mentality, while his challenger's is not? Thirdly, we must contextualize this literary figure with the notions of the time in which he arises in this instance. To fully understand Mozart's conception of the character, one must consider the Enlightment's influence on the storyline. Finally, I will present concepts of seduction as they appear in the opera for your consideration, and their subsequent expressions in four distinct areas.

Relationship between Leporello and Don Giovanni

"Notte e giorno faticar / per chi nulla se gradir;..."

~ Leporello in Don Giovanni

The character of Leporello presents the audience with, quite possibly, the most intimate look at Don Giovanni's complete psychological configuration. He is an essential part of the protagonist's most private life, one who knows all of his master's schemes, and it is he who is in direct dialogue with the audience, thereby making the audience members accomplices in our hero's escapades. But first and foremost, he balances Don Giovanni's sensual indulgences with a rational, if not at times fearful, cataloging of possible repercussions that the licentious aristocrat could face if caught in the act. Precisely due to this relationship, the very storyline of the opera cannot function without the presence of Leporello at Don Giovanni's side, and it is why this character has persisted alongside that of his master in the most popular renditions of the legend since his original conception in Tirso de Molina's play, "El Burlador de Sevilla"[1].

From the start of the opera, we learn of Leporello's unhappiness and dependence on his master: "Labouring night and day / for one who's never satisfied; [...] I want to be a gentleman of leisure, / and not serve any more." (libretto, 53). Clearly, there exists an economic reason for staying with Don Giovanni, who is a member of the upper echelons of the Spanish aristocracy, but, more precisely, what we see is a desire to become like his master, a "gentleman of leisure." He is accustomed to being near to a powerful figure, and has become so entrenched in his servant position, that he portrays an aspect of Don Giovanni: the wish to indulge himself in his fantasies. The first instance of this occurs when the duo arrives at the wedding of the peasants Masetto and Zerlina. Leporello is

[1] The Trickster of Seville.

chastised by Don Giovanni for fooling around with young village girls, and replies to this punishment by quoting his master verbatim, claiming to 'offer protection' to the women, as Don Giovanni had offered to Zerlina in the previous verse:

> "[Don Giovanni:] My dear Masetto, my dear Zerlina,
> I offer you my protection!
> *(to Leporello who is fooling with the other girls)*
> Leporello! ... What are you up to, you scamp?" (libretto, 83)

Longing for the ability to indulge himself, Leporello retains the bitter knowledge that, in order to survive, he must submit to the humiliation that his master frequently inflicts upon him, and through doing so, he will be able to stay near our protagonist and assure Giovanni's safety and his own well-being. For Leporello, this is a poisonous but symbiotic relationship.

This is not to say that the man-servant never gets to express his own beliefs, on the contrary, he often chides Don Giovanni for his actions and berates him for his lifestyle, all the while foreshadowing the demise of our hero. Leporello constantly brings his counterpart back into a reality which will enact punishments for transgressions (i.e.: sexual relations, trickery, lies) that are committed. In a certain respect, he is the superego to Giovanni's id. For, without the threat of retribution, there is no explanation for the figure of a libertine to be considered an offensive character. "Giovanni's claim, in the first recitative of the second act, that women, ... , (are more necessary to me than the bread I eat and the air I breathe), identifies him unequivocally with the discourse of Enlightened libertinage" (Ford, 116). This division of one personality into two individuals requires the frequent presence on stage of each individual in order to construct a complete protagonist, because by itself, one character is indecipherable without its counterpart. And interestingly enough, the two men are rarely seen without

the other, only when Don Giovanni uses Leporello as a double or a stand-in for himself. In the most blatant instance of this, at the beginning of Act II, the valet impersonates the aristocrat and tries to convince Donna Elvira that he has reformed his ways. Leporello states that he is enjoying this situation: "La burla mi dà gusto" (libretto, 153). The men's roles have changed, because as the valet becomes the master, Giovanni becomes the servant in order to woo Elvira's maid, and is then confronted by Masetto, who is searching to kill the aristocrat. "[Don Giovanni:] Don't you know me? / I'm Don Giovanni's servant. [Masetto:] Leporello! / Servant to that so-called gentleman!" (libretto, 157). The interchangeability of these two men demonstrates how important one half is to the other.

Although Leporello is disgusted by all that his master does, he remains committed to him amid threats of leaving, perhaps most obviously noted at the beginning of the second act:

> "[Don Giovanni:] Come on, you fool, stop provoking me!
> [Leporello:] No, no master, I won't stay.
> [Don Giovanni:] Listen, my friend...
> [Leporello:] I'm off, I tell you.
> [...]
> [Don Giovanni:] Come here, let's make it up: take this...
> [Leporello:] What?
> [Don Giovanni:] Four doubloons.
> [Leporello:] Well, all right, just once again
> I'll settle for the old routine.
> But it's not to become a habit: you can't
> seduce a man like me
> with money,
> as you do the ladies." (libretto, 139-141)

Yes, here Leporello decides to stay for an obvious economic impulse, but also because he knows that Don Giovanni needs him to stay. This realization is simultaneously shared by

his master, as noted in the response to Leporello's last line (above): "[Don Giovanni:] Let's change the subject: have you got / the spirit to do what I ask?" (libretto, 141). Our protagonist allows Leporello to take the spotlight in the opera, vis-à-vis impersonating his individual persona, when his circumstances take a turn for the worse. While trying to woo Donna Elvira, he changes his clothing with Leporello's in order to appear less as the aristocrat he is, and forces his servant to act in his stead. After Leporello flees with Elvira, Giovanni impersonates him in order to escape being captured by Masetto. This blatant manifestation of the servant-master relationship not only supports Otto Rank's hypothesis that, "The tragedy of Leporello is that he is permitted to represent his master only in the painful and critical situations" (Rank, 46), but also shows just how closely these two men are dependant upon one another. In the second act, Don Giovanni will go so far as to claim Leporello's wife as another of his objects of desire.

Such scenes as these tend to present themselves with less frequency towards the end of the opera as Don Giovanni takes more responsibility for his own actions. When invited to dine with the Stone Guest (the ghostly representation of the Commendatore, not to be confused with the living version of Donna Anna's father), it is the protagonist who shuns Leporello aside, amid strong protests on the servant's part, and accepts the invitation to his eventual demise. It is this, the absolute negation of his conscience, which severs the two men from one another, and ultimately leads to freedom for both. Leporello accompanies Don Giovanni to his death, more to witness the end of the hero than to criticize his actions. The valet continues in his former vein of protest, because he knows no other relation to his master and realizes that he is incapable of helping him in

the face of such castigation. Both men know that "[...] it is typical of his [Don Juan's] nobility to have accepted all the rules of the game." (Camus, 74).

All of this, however, is not meant to imply that the two men are solely one unit; no, they must also function as individuals in this relationship. Leporello will not share in Don Giovanni's ultimate punishment, because he voiced opposition to his master's actions, and underlines the fact that they are two distinct characters. But even before the introduction of the Stone Guest into the storyline, there is delineation between the two men at the end of Act I. As Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, Zerlina, Don Ottavio, and Masetto reveal themselves from behind masks and call Don Giovanni out on his deeds, the master/servant pair sing a duet describing the effect this revelation is having on Don Giovanni:

> "[Don Giovanni & Leporello:]
> My/his head is in a whirl,
> I don't know what is happening to me/him,
> but some dreadful calamity
> is hanging over me/him.
> My/His courage is still high, though,
> and I/he will not be confounded;
> let the world fall around my/his ears,
> nothing will make me/him afraid." (libretto, 137)

Leporello deliberately distances himself from his master here, so that the anger of the others does not fall upon him. But as this is the finale of Act I, he also does it to enhance the dramatic effect of the opera, isolating Don Giovanni as the central figure of the performance. The valet would be physically distancing himself too, in order to underline the fact that it is Don Giovanni's actions and desires, and not Leporello's, that propel the movement of the storyline forward. The building, intensifying volume of the music

strikingly underlines this separation, and allows Leporello to begin to assert more of his own views of his master.

The second act opens with the two men arguing about the state of affairs in which they find themselves, and we see Leporello continuing to individualize himself even more by threatening to leave Don Giovanni's service, to liberate himself from his master. The protagonist's response to this is to change roles a second time, in order to take advantage of Donna Elvira's chambermaid. But the aristocrat's ultimate transgression against Leporello comes in the form of claiming to have seduced the servant's wife. It should be noted that the Stone Guest enters at the precise moment that Don Giovanni is laughing at having told Leporello this news. The statue greets the main character with a warning that he has crossed the last line, as if he had violated the only remaining sanctity of Christianity, that of marriage. This marks a transgression within the master/servant relationship, and the final liberation of the two men from one another is almost complete. When commanded to invite the statue to dinner, Leporello makes it clear that "my master.../ mark well, not I.../ invites you to dine with him" (libretto, 187), so as to distance himself even more from his master. It is also at this point in the opera that the reprimanding bass-baritone voice of Leporello is superceded by the bass voice of the Stone Guest; a voice that indicates an even deeper and masculine character, one that incarnates a reminiscent father figure.

"The demon of death, who returns from the grave to devour the guilty, is nothing more that the personification of the pangs of conscience, which as such betrays their origin in the primal act of parricide. The anxiety about the return of the father and his particular revenge (devouring), ..., can be explained as anxiety about retaliation, arising from a sense of guilt" (Rank, 78).

Leporello continues to try and influence Don Giovanni, because he wants to survive, and believes the statue may have come to seek retribution on him as well. We hear this in his cry to his master at the appearance of the Stone Guest at dinner, "Ah, master, we're all as good as dead!" (libretto, 205). And as he realizes that Don Giovanni is the only one invited to dine with the statue, he tries to speak for his master, and is immediately quieted. He implores his master to not accept the invitation, but to no avail. Leporello witnesses the death of his other half in hellish flames and screams in anguish, which echo those of his master as he dies. Leporello is not left alone at the end of the opera; as is his dependent nature, he goes to the tavern to search for another, "better master" (libretto, 215).

Alternative Masculinities & Modi Operandi

"Come mai creder deggio / di sì nero delitto capace un cavaliere!"

~Don Ottavio in Don Giovanni

Don Giovanni is not the sole male figure that is presented to the audience for consideration of a discussion of seduction in society. We are also able to view Don Ottavio, Leporello, and Masetto as alternate models for seductive techniques in the opera. Not only do they employ various models for seduction, but they also present the viewer with varying strengths of masculine identities.

Don Ottavio is the figure in the opera that most explicitly challenges Don Giovanni's status, and yet balances his domineering nature with a milder form of seduction. These two men only connect at one nexus: Donna Anna. She is the only reference point that dictates the rules of interaction between the two Spanish aristocrats. If Don Giovanni had never attempted to violate her, Don Ottavio would never have had reason to cross paths with our hero. "Ottavio is the Other Man, whose idealism has precisely the reverse content to Giovanni's negative libertine metaphysic. Giovanni's active, material desire for any woman *now* is opposed to Ottavio's passive resignation to wait years for Anna" (Ford, 123-124).

These two men even go so far as to identify themselves differently with regard to social class. Ottavio represents the old guard, a chivalrous character who holds fast to the ideals of wooing a maid from afar. Don Giovanni, as the librettist and composer have reinvented him, is an eighteenth century, enlightened individualist driven by his ego and the liberation of pleasure, an aspect of one of the most prolific genres of that century (e.g. Byron, Casanova, and Sade). "Cette malédiction [séduction] s´est maintenue inchangée à

travers la morale et la philosophie, aujourd´hui à travers la psychanalyse et la «libération du désir»[2]" (Baudrillard, 9). These polar opposites have an innate tension between them: Ottavio embraces his aristocratic life and closely identifies with it, whereas our hero has no scruples about taking a woman from any social class, and even going so far as to promise marriage to her. Hence Ottavio's surprise when Anna realizes that it was Giovanni who attempted to murdered her father, "[Don Ottavio:] Come mai creder deggio / di sì nero delitto capace un cavaliere!"[3] (libretto, 104).

Mozart's staging of this opera in Spain is not simply because he is following literary tradition, but rather also because the country "had long been notorious ... as a repository of all the pre-enlightenment values—honour, superstition, absolutism, Catholicism, tout compris" (Brophy, 103). Thus, an even more striking contrast between Ottavio and Giovanni is made when the protagonist is viewed as a seducer in an Enlightenment sense, rather than in a pre-Enlightenment sense.

Da Ponte and Mozart debuted this piece in 1787 in Prague, quite far from the Iberian Peninsula. Viewed in the light of early modernity, with political and social power being taken from God and put in the hands of humans; it is the society in which Don Giovanni operates that attempts to punish him for his actions. But the difference between punishment in a pre-Enlightenment setting and an Enlightenment one is that in the latter Don Giovanni is despised for his power of disturbing the peace, not necessarily for being of immoral character (Brophy, 80). To explain the appearance of the Stone Guest as the ultimate revenge at the conclusion of the opera, it is possible to theorize that given the continued belief in some supernatural forces, as cited above, Spanish society still was

[2] "The curse [seduction] is maintained by morality and philosophy, and today by psychoanalysis and the 'liberation of desire.'"
[3] "How can I believe a knight capable of such a black crime?"

able to revert to a celestial castration / death brought by a father figure par excellence, the spirit of Donna Anna's father.

Whilst Don Giovanni is considered by many scholars to be a libertine figure that indulges in his seduced object and subsequently leaves it, Don Ottavio shows a longer dependence on women, Donna Anna in particular. In an alternate concert version of his aria in Act I, Scene ii, after having heard her pleas for revenge, he states:

> "[Don Giovanni:] On her [Anna's] peace of mind my own depends;
> her wishes are the breath of life to me,
> her griefs stab me to the heart.
> When she sighs, I sigh too,
> I share her anger and her tears.
> And there's no joy for me if she has none, *etc*." (libretto, 217)

This solo is also musically constructed around a preceding aria by Anna, one that is based in a 2:4 time structure along with having complimentary tonal notes (Ford, 124-125). But as Don Ottavio's music is attached harmonically to Anna's music, our protagonist's notes set the stage and structure for all relationships in the opera. He is at times isolated from other characters' harmonies, and can at times be in direct opposition to them (Dent, 156). Don Giovanni is not hanging on Donna Anna's every breath, as we see his counterpart doing, but rather striking out in new directions.

One voice that pivots between Don Giovanni and the Stone Guest is mediated by none other than the protagonist's man-servant, Leporello. These three are counterpoints to one another in reference to scales of music with which they are identified: Don Giovanni with D minor, Leporello with F major, and the Commendatore with D minor. Interestingly enough, these figures are interchangeable on many levels as well. The first scene which these three share is the death of the Commendatore. While the id is dueling and killing the father figure, the super-ego is hidden in the shadows, having been cast

aside by Don Giovanni. It is not until Donna Anna's father is dead, that Leporello is reunited with his master and he then immediately assumes a sense of guilt for the murder:

> "[Leporello:] What a crime! How dreadful!
> I can feel my heart
> pounding with fright!
> I don't know what to do or say, *etc*." (libretto, 57).

We have already seen how Leporello and Don Giovanni substitute one another and reflect one another psychologically, but Leporello and the Commendatore are also closely related. Both of these men are bass singers, and the latter effectively replaces the former in the final scene of Don Giovanni's life. The Stone Guest arrives at the dinner given by Don Giovanni, and the servant's reaction is: "[Leporello:] Ah, master, we're all as good as dead" (libretto, 205). Here the valet explicitly identifies with his master, and expects the wrath of his master's actions to fall upon him as well, since he views himself as accomplice to Giovanni's life. But it would not follow to punish Leporello here, because, as already stated, Mozart and Da Ponte recreated the figure of Don Giovanni as an *individualistic*, enlightened man. Although Leporello is identified strongly as a representation of the super-ego, he is still an individual in his own right. As a matter of fact, the protagonist definitively cuts Leporello from him in a response to the last citation: "[Don Giovanni:] Go along, I tell you! ..." (libretto, 205).

The Statue asserts his presence here, engaging in direct dialogue with Don Giovanni. As Leporello twice tries in vain to intervene on his master's behalf, the Guest's character overtakes the servant's role and the emphasis of Leporello diminishes until after Giovanni is dead. Musically, a series of crescendos, decrescendos, and allegros propel the music along to its climax. At each instance that the Statue speaks, all music leading into his verse abruptly halts and his voice dominates the scene. With the

prominence of the psyche moving from Leporello's scolding remarks and cries (actions of a super ego) of restraint to the Stone Guest's execution of reprimand (actions of an ego), we also see Don Giovanni unable to move from or even stop the escalating situation:

> "... the libertine, in order to ward off that punishment [of castration], must continually assert his virility in order to prove that the punishment has not yet overtaken him. But he is caught in the same trap as the eighteenth-century arts: with each act of proof, he incurs a deeper guilt, and enjoys less pleasure." (Brophy, 85)

Perhaps because in this setting there are no women, our hero is unable to devise an escape route. In effect, he is in a room with solely himself, personified in a masculine trinity of father, son, and messenger. He is unable to escape himself.

Solely in the presence of men does the question of honor even arise. Don Giovanni's reputation undoubtedly precedes him within the feminine circles, but the men in the opera, Leporello excluded, all espouse the concept of honor to some degree. Reason guided Enlightenment thought, and honor was a concept that, although now de-Christianized, still pervaded society. One of the novelties that Da Ponte introduces to the Don Juan theme with this version is rather important: he extends the right of honor to lower social classes. That is not to say that it did not exist in the original play, *El Burlador de Sevilla*, because it is certainly there, however, here it underlines an enlightenment ideal of just society: protection of socially marginalized people. Masetto is the antithesis of Don Giovanni in this respect.

The peasantry is still being victimized by the aristocracy in 1787, as we see in Don Giovanni's seduction of Zerlina. Whereas Don Giovanni will go to any length to secure his pleasure, even use his social status as a tool, Masetto can only resignedly let

events unfold, until in the second act he attempts to capture the protagonist. The "villager of honor," as Masetto refers to himself, never distances himself from his social station, unlike our hero who fluidly moves from one class to another through disguises and assertion of power. In fact, as demonstrated with the case of Don Ottavio, Giovanni rarely assumes a determined social title. He would refuse to duel Masetto outright, because it would be beneath him as an aristocrat, but Giovanni's desire for pleasure dictates his decision to trick and maim his opponent with the latter's very own weapon.

Masetto, in reference to the other male figures in the opera, is the only character to turn a cold shoulder to women. He is skeptical of Don Giovanni's intentions with Zerlina from the moment that the protagonist enters into his wedding celebrations. His fiancée is the one who trusts the *signore* implicitly based on codes of social rank. Our hero even goes so far as to extend Masetto an honorary title of sorts, "[Don Giovanni:] Oh! Good man! At my service! / Spoken like a real gentleman!" (libretto, 81). Oddly enough, he is also the only male to show jealousy, for none of the other men of the opera are in a similar relationship with a woman. We never hear or see Leporello or Don Ottavio chastise their respective girlfriends / fiancées.

***Don Giovanni* & Notions of Enlightenment Thought**

"Viva la libertà! La libertà!"

~Donna Elvira, Donna Anna, Don Ottavio, Don Giovanni, Leporello in Don Giovanni

There is no doubt that with each new rendition of the Don Juan theme new elements and ideas are added or removed, according to the Zeitgeist. Mozart and Da Ponte's co-developed piece is no different. They have brought Don Juan into the eighteenth century with a new name and as a liberated man. This does not mean, however, that his social problems have been left behind, rather, he encounters new manifestations of them. When the social paradigm of comportment changes, the social rules for transgression change as well. This allows for the continuation of the Don Juan theme, but updates the circumstances so that a contemporary audience can comprehend it according to the new values of the age, chiefly among them in the case of Don Giovanni: Reason.

If we were to take Kant's essay "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" as a primary example, we learn that the goal of the Enlightenment is emancipation from one's own tutelage. Tutelage being, "man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another" (Kramnick, 1). The slogan of the Enlightenment, as espoused by Kant, *Sapere aude!*[4], challenges one to think on an individual level, and to liberate one's own ego with Reason. This close connection between the ego and Reason leads to more than just determining moral judgments, a chief responsibility of Reason, it also leads to another phenomenon in the eighteenth century: Reason as the guiding force behind the emancipation of pleasure. "The eighteenth century's great perception was that the desire for pleasure motivated all living conduct" (Brophy, 62). Don Giovanni, as

[4] "Dare to know!"

previously determined, is governed by his desire for pleasure, and as fits his new incarnation in Mozart's life and time, pleasure is recognized by the Enlightenment as a moral judgment in and of itself. Indeed, the Marquis de Sade even went so far as to proclaim that to Pleasure belonged "divine laws" and that, "... [I]t is only by sacrificing everything to the sense's pleasure that this individual, who never asked to be cast into the universe of woe, that this poor creature who goes under the name of Man, may be able to sow a smattering of roses atop the thorny path of life" (Sade, 185). Reason was the guiding force behind discerning the pleasurable from the not-pleasurable.

Returning to the focus on the individual, we must also consider the notion of subjectivity versus that of objectivity. This age saw a flourishing of the natural sciences and establishment of common measuring systems. Objectivity is always expressed with empirical evidence of observed phenomena. Subjectivity is a term which implies individual perception, and not necessarily something that can be supported by empirical evidence. As Kant wrote in his *Critique of Judgement*,

> "The judgement of taste, therefore, is not a cognitive judgement, and so not logical, but is aesthetic – which means that it is one whose determining ground *cannot be other than subjective*. Every reference of representation is capable of being objective, even that of sensations (in which case it signifies the real in an empirical representation). The one exception to this is the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. This denotes nothing in the object, but is a feeling which the Subject has of itself and of the manner in which it is affected by the representation. (Kant, 41-42)

We see that pleasure's subjective nature is therefore is the one area of judgment that is outside of the realm of Logic, a tool so near and dear to the hearts of Enlightenment philosophers. Although Kant is making an argument for Aesthetic judgment here, it can be used to support the contention of determining pleasure in Don Giovanni's sense as

well because he is viewed as an emancipated man, perhaps best exemplified in his exclamation near the end of Act I: "Viva la libertà!" (libretto, 128).

In an attempt to give Don Giovanni a more three-dimensional character and profundity, he is presented to us through the eyes and opinions of all other characters. "Don Giovanni's indirect characterisation is another of Mozart's trouvailles: nothing happens in the course of the opera that is not closely associated with him; all the words and experiences of the rest of the characters reflect him..." (Liebner, 151). This is an intriguing device, which compliments the scientific emphasis that the Enlightenment embraces. The supporting cast members, everyone other than our hero, take on the roles of remote monitoring instruments that provide objective, and sometimes subjective, measurements of Don Giovanni. Through their sensations and perceptions, we are given a more complete portrait of the licentious aristocrat. As Kant outlined in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, "A *perception* [(*perceptio*)] which relates solely to the subject as the modification of its state is *sensation* (*sensation*), an objective perception is *knowledge* (*cognition*)" (Beardsley, 414). Each of the women that he encounters experiences him from a different angle, as he will adapt like a chameleon does, to choose the appropriate formula with which to seduce them.

This leads one to contemplate the concept of seduction in and of itself. The word encompasses diverse meanings, some of which are: "to err in conduct or belief," "to lead astray," "persuasion," "temptation," and "surrendering of chastity" (OED). Prior to the Enlightenment all of these meanings were viewed in a negative light, and were to be avoided. It was not until the eighteenth century that "pleasure was recognised as moral in its own right" (Brophy, 62). One important connection must be established here: the fact

that seduction and pleasure, be it straightforward or perverse, are intrinsically linked. Seduction is a method used to obtain pleasure, and pleasure is a gratification of one or more of the senses. But it must be clarified that seduction is not driven by solely physical attributes, "Jamais la séduction ne se joue sur le désir ou la propension amoureuse – tout cela est vulgaire mécanique et physique charnelle: inintéressant. Il faut que tout se réponde par allusion subtile, ...[5]" (Baudrillard, 139). For any seduction to occur there must be a subject and an object present, as it is the subject's desire to obtain pleasure from the object. This association is often exemplified in terms of power relations between the two (or more) parties involved. To achieve gratification, the subject must convince the object to submit to the former's will. Now, this implies a friction or resistance between the two participants which must be overcome in order to achieve the desired results. Foucault puts forth the idea of a variety of resistance points which must be dealt with before pleasure can be achieved. In speaking on power relationships, "Their existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network" (Foucault, 95).

In the case of our protagonist, this is especially true because he not only has each woman in mind as the targets of his seduction, but also other factors that influence his decisions. Social mores of comportment and virtue are obstacles he must manage, as well as transgression of marital ties, and the reconciliation of his actions with his own conscience. This last one he handles seemingly frenetically by first displacing any moral qualms onto Leporello and then subsequently dictating when the servant can and cannot

[5] "Never does seduction play out in the desire or amorous inclination – all of that is vulgar mechanics and carnal physique. Rather, it comes out in subtle allusion..."

speak. The former two are more complex situations which are never completely settled by the end of the opera, because Don Giovanni dies before they can be resolved. This is to be expected because there is no *single* locus of resistance, but rather multiple ones that go into forming these situations, namely the development of cultural norms which arise from centuries of history.

These impediments to Don Giovanni's pursuit of gratification raise the question, how does the aristocrat perceive the pleasure that he seeks? Pleasure as satisfaction is registered by an individual through the senses. So it is necessary to distinguish the difference between sensations and feelings. Sensations are objective phenomena, because they are solely registered marks of measuring instruments (the senses), whereas feelings are subjective because these are reactions to the sensations within an individual (Kant, 45). Therefore, Pleasure is a feeling which our protagonist seeks to fulfill, not simply a momentary sensation, although he will arrive at Pleasure through experiencing sensations. That is not to say that objective measurements are undesired, on the contrary, they are required in order to provoke a reaction within us which are feelings. Although one famous libertine took this to an extreme: "...[F]or there is no rational commensuration between what affects us and what affects others; the first we sense physically, the other only touches us morally, and moral feelings are made to deceive; none but physical sensations are authentic;..." (Sade, 491).

Interestingly enough, the opera begins with at least one definite act of a carnal sin (or pleasure, depending on one's point of view): the murder of the Commendatore. I say "at least one" because except for Donna Anna's account of the attack, which excludes direct mention of a rape, we have no information about what occurred in her apartment.

Moreover, immediately after Anna returns to consciousness after having fainted, she asks Don Ottavio to swear that he "will avenge his [the Commendatore's] murder!" (libretto, 63), and not her own dishonoring. Be it one carnal act or two, if we are to include Anna having been raped, the opera opens with strong actions on the part of Don Giovanni. From there, his subsequent attempts to entice Donna Elvira and Zerlina are rather frivolous in character. Whereas at the beginning of the opera the aristocrat starts with serious transgressions to achieve a pleasurable feeling, his desire for pleasure switches to another kind with Giovanni's encounter with Elvira, one of modified courtly love. He attempts to woo her from below her windowsill, reminiscent of the troubadours of the medieval period, with "promises and flattery" (libretto, 71). Yes, he did go to bed with her in a past occasion, and she freely admits it, but his ultimate goal was to fulfill a feeling of honor, to achieve a mental or intellectual feeling, not necessarily to satiate a carnal pleasure. Finally, in regards to the relationship with Zerlina, this relationship is determined by two specific phenomena: childish coquetry and physical indulgence of a non-sexual nature. As much as Don Giovanni tries to grasp the peasant woman, he never achieves this due to interruptions by others. She even has to defend herself to Masetto by declaring that nothing scandalous occurred between the aristocrat and her, although he never wants to believe it until the end of the opera when Don Giovanni is dead, because suspicion and gossip are enough to destroy his own sense of honor.

The second aspect of the protagonist's relationship with Zerlina is physical in nature, but never manifests itself sexually. The two first meet in the wedding celebration, a scene best described by Masetto and Zerlina: "Let's enjoy ourselves! / What delight, what delight is in store!" (libretto, 79). With music and dance, as indicated by the

opera's stage directions, the festive scene appeals to all five senses with rich sound (a stark contrast musically from the heavy tones of Elvira's declaration of revenge), colorful costumes (a large social event), food, dancing, etc. Don Giovanni instructs Leporello to move all the party to his villa to continue with more food and drink: wine, coffee, chocolate, sorbets, sweets, etc. (libretto, 127). As the end of the first act's music mounts, and all characters (minus the Commendatore) are present on stage in what, at first, seems to develop into a quasi-collective orgy, Don Giovanni makes his one and only attempt to sexually engage Zerlina, who is rescued by the other disenchanted characters. This becomes the turning point of the opera and ultimately turns our hero off of women for the second half. At the point when he attempts to seduce Donna Elvira's maid, Leporello impersonates Don Giovanni to seduce her *in his stead*, and before the maid can enter into the scene, Masetto interrupts and distracts our hero from going any further.

The most ironic part of this emphasis on physical sensations perceived through the senses lies in the fact that the food and drink which is used for celebration in Act I, is portrayed as a poisonous, lethal substance for the body in Act II. This runs parallel with the most carnal act committed during the course of the opera, the death of the Commendatore. Don Giovanni effectively invites the Stone Guest on a dinner date, and although it does take place, our hero receives the ultimate rejection for his past transgressions.

This one is, oddly enough, the only relationship that we are allowed to see in its entirety. Since the opera opens in media res, we are not permitted to see the work that went in to Don Giovanni's enticement of Donna Anna. Nor do we see the relations that he had with Donna Elvira which is understood to have occurred at some point in the past.

In the case of Zerlina, we only see him successfully distract her from Masetto, but when Giovanni attempts a transgression at the end of Act I, he has danced her out to the balcony, which is conveniently located offstage. The one relationship that we do see in its entirety is between the Commendatore and Don Giovanni. In a way, our protagonist negates Donna Anna's father from the start, and the Commendatore wants revenge for this rejection, as written on his sepulcher: "Retribution here awaits the evildoer / who sent me to my grave" (libretto, 185). If we use Leporello's "list aria" from Act I as an account, we see that Don Giovanni has never invited a man to dine with him; the Stone Guest will be the first one.

Upon the entrance of the Stone Guest to our hero's villa, Mozart uses an intricate musical reminder to recall images of the past. The music that accompanies the Guest is precisely the same score that opens the opera: it is the overture. The dinner scene conjures images of the supernatural with its powerful blast of trombones, which Mozart used in his other operas to denote the same concept (Griffiths, 19). Although he did not establish this tradition, it impresses upon the audience the presence of the past in the present moment. Don Giovanni is unable to continually run from his own actions and his own memory.

We must ask ourselves, is Don Giovanni running from his memory in order to avoid it, or is he simply incapable of retaining long-term memories? All of the characters give the audience glimpses into their respective lives through some form of self-descriptive aria, except for our protagonist. We rely on Leporello's memory and accounts and all of Giovanni's enemies to describe how the hero is. "There is a saying to the effect that the liar has a short memory; however, what happens is that he forgets the

imaginary constructions supporting his lies and thus reveals the hidden truth through a variety of lapses" (Carotenuto, 182). He never releases any information about his past, except that he hints that he has been licentious, or at least always surrounded by women, whom he considers essential to his survival, "Forget women! You know I need them / more than the bread I eat, / more than the air I breathe!" (libretto, 143).

Elvira is perhaps the one female figure who is a threat to his memory. She is the lover who returns from his past and wants him to confront his actions. Ironically enough, it is she who, in the end, asks him to repent his ways before the arrival of the Stone Guest to dinner. Each time that Don Giovanni is confronted with Donna Elvira, he escapes by placing Leporello in his place, except when she approaches him while he is speaking with Don Ottavio and Donna Anna, and then he is then forced to improvise. If his objective is to choose the best course of action at a given time, with no consideration of his past choices, he becomes incapable of pursuing any long-term relationship, sexual or otherwise. As he needs constant affirmation from women in order to enjoy life (see: previous citation), and as far as he is concerned, substituting Woman X for Woman Y is necessary precisely because he cannot commit to any specific woman, for he does not have the ability to share a common past with any one person. This would lead one to the conclusion that, in order to satiate his taste for women along with bread and air, a new conquest is required on each occasion (Griffiths, 18). It is not until towards the end of the opera, when all of his amorous advances are being thwarted, that he is forced to try and deal with his past in the form of the Stone Guest.

Once the date is underway in Giovanni's villa, the phantom caller turns the tables on his host and invites him on a second date. This is another aspect we have not yet seen:

Don Giovanni being the one whom someone else is seeking. The subject of past relationships, and the determiner of all associations, becomes the object of the Stone Guest's pleasure. It only follows that since the Stone Guest has taken over Leporello's role of Giovanni's superego, that he also assumes the function of the id in order to bring all parts of the same psyche together, thus unifying the three disparate parts in one entity. Amid Don Giovanni's refusals of repentance, the deal is sealed with a handshake, here a masculine equivalent of physical transgression and also considered an indication of honor.

Concepts of Seduction in *Don Giovanni*

"Tu ch'hai la bocca porti in mezzo al core, / non esser, gioia mia, con me crudele, ..."

~Don Giovanni in Don Giovanni

In previous sections, we have seen various employments of seductive methods, but it still remains to be discussed, what is meant by seduction itself. Many sources, from critiques to musicological treatises, use the word without specific definition or explanation, and although a precise meaning is elusive, in *Don Giovanni* we are able to demarcate it clearly as the creation of an illusion in order to secure one's own pleasure. This encompasses many levels of application: singular-illusion, group-illusion, self-illusion, and in the specific case of theater, participatory-illusion.

As regards singular-illusion, this term denotes the use of seductive methods on another person or object. We have previously established that the only true seduction that we see is that of the Commendatore, although we can place the individual cases of Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, and Zerlina under this section as well. Don Giovanni paints himself to be either Don Ottavio, or a gentlemanly, honorable person, or a principled aristocrat respectively. He simulates parts of a character which he does not possess, and this simulation is part of his seduction. He creates these illusions in order to achieve his pleasure. The implication of an absent trait leads to a confusion of reality and fantasy, a divide that he straddles throughout all of his seductions.

> "To dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one hasn't. One implies a presence, the other an absence. But the matter is more complicated, since to simulate is not simply to feign: "Someone who feigns an illness can simply go to bed and pretend he is ill. Someone who simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms" (Littré). Thus, feigning or dissimulating leaves the reality principle intact: the difference is always clear, it is only masked; whereas simulation threatens the difference between "true" and "false", between "real" and "imaginary". (Baudrillard, 366-367).

Our hero is more than simply feigning his situation, as he creates a reality for the sole purpose of achieving a pleasurable experience. The one case in which we see him become trapped by his own illusions is with the Stone Guest. He is given at least three opportunities to save himself (Donna Elvira, Leporello, and the Stone Guest), but refuses and holds on to his own reality that he has created with the invited phantom. Don Giovanni does not view the fate of hell as a punishment (Camus, 75), which prior to the Enlightenment was the reigning paradigm, but rather as another series of experiences (quite possibly even pleasures), as the Stone Guest offers the aristocrat to dine with him.

We need to look now at the setting of all of our hero's seductions. The great majority of the opera occurs after the sun has set, with Leporello only once hinting that dawn is approaching (libretto, 67). Don Giovanni uses the shadows and cover of darkness to create his illusionary worlds, without this, his job of simulation would be much harder, as for example, Donna Anna would be able to see that he is not her beloved Ottavio, thereby negating the whole reason for the story in the first place, since he would not ever have the chance to kill the Commendatore. Donna Elvira enters the opera precisely when the sun is rising, and brings with her the light of Don Giovanni's past. He is incapable of facing the revelations that she brings with her and puts Leporello in his place to handle the situation. The valet does stay and speak with Elvira, in the full light of day, about his master, but he does so by revealing even more about his master through recounting the catalogue of women that Giovanni has seduced (libretto, 75-77). Yet another aspect of the master/servant relation is shown by this: they wholly encompass the maxim of two people who are night and day.

In Jean Baudrillard's essay, *De La Séduction*, he points out in his introductory paragraph, "Un destin ineffaçable pèse sur la séduction. Pour la religion, elle fut la stratégie du diable, qu´elle fut sorcière ou amoureuse. La séduction est toujours celle du mal. Ou celle du monde. C´est l´*artifice* du monde. ... [L]a séduction soit pourtant restée dans l´ombre..." (Baudrillard, 9).[6] To see the seduction in this opera, it is important that we must always look in the shadows, as presented to us under the guise of night, but we must also realize that it is necessary to look in the periphery, into the shadows of the interactions that our protagonist has with the other characters. The fact that we never *see* the purported seductions of Elvira, Anna, and Zerlina, indicates that Don Giovanni operates in the margins, and performs his most vile transgressions when no one is looking. His search for carnal fulfillment happens only after dusk, be it sex or murder. When he meets Zerlina and Masetto for the first time, it is during the evening transition period of late afternoon to nightfall, with the aristocrat moving the party from the rural setting to his villa. His manipulation of the surroundings allows him to more readily control the illusion(s) that he employs for his attempted seduction of the villager. The fact that he uses shadow in his seductions adds a conflict to Don Giovanni's persona: he works on the outer fringes of the socially acceptable, yet everyone is made aware of his trysts, and still he appears to treat their knowledge with indifference.

The temporal aspect of the opera is not the only one which prominently underlines Don Giovanni's seductions, we must also be aware of the space which he uses for his seductions. More specifically, we must look at the space the audience sees and the space in which the sexual transgressions occur. In the case of Donna Anna, the supposed

[6] "One indelible destiny deals with seduction. For religion, it was the strategy of the devil, it was either a black art or amorous [in nature]. Seduction is always that which is bad. Or that of the world. It's the ruse of the world. ... Seduction must remain, nonetheless, in the shadows."

indiscretion occurs conveniently offstage, but the space in which she vows revenge is public, exterior to her father's house. The mortal skirmish between the two men plays out in the street, turning the story immediately from a private scandal into a case meriting the involvement of the public sphere. Donna Elvira oft confronts Giovanni in the streets as well, persistently revealing his actions to public scrutiny. From this point in the opera, if our hero is to seduce anyone else, it must be a seduction on a grander scale, one including members of the public sphere. This leads one to consider the effect that the protagonist has on the group as a whole.

Group-illusion means to represent the larger seduction of the society, or at least the characters present in this opera that represent the society, for Don Giovanni must seduce them to believe in his reality, if he is to continue seeking pleasure from individuals. To view this, we must consider the licentious aristocrat not as the great lover which centuries of adaptations of the Don Juan theme have made him out to be, but rather the great beloved of many women (Liebner, 146). From Leporello's catalogue aria, we learn exactly how many women Don Giovanni has known, in the Biblical sense, and we can use it as a model for our hero's seductive prowess. Of course, in Freudian thought, he is on a search for a motherly figure to replace the sexual desire he has for her, but this is not a sufficient explanation as to why he continues his search after more than two thousand "conquests" (according to Leporello's calculations). Perhaps if we take another perspective and return to Giovanni's exclamation of women being as important to him as bread and air, we can see another reason. By placing them with food and air, they are given an essential status; he cannot survive without them. But just like the former must be constantly replenished through natural processes, so must the women whom he

encounters. A one-time indulgence turns into an addiction. Brophy claims, "The libertine is really courting not women but his own destruction. The opportunity to indulge in pleasure has turned into an obligation; the Ego is just as enslaved to hedonism as ever it was to the father-figures who imposed abstinence" (86). As the protagonist is affected by his addiction, the women experience an identification with one another (which we see in the friendship that emerges between Anna, Elvira, and Zerlina) that is almost virally contagious:

"... [T]he possibility or desire of putting oneself in the same situation. The other girls would like to have a secret love affair too, and under the influence of a sense of guilt they also accept the suffering involved in it. It would be wrong to suppose that they take on the symptom out of sympathy. On the contrary, the sympathy only arises out of the identification ... One ego has perceived a significant analogy with another upon one point ... an identification is thereupon constructed on this point" (Freud, 440).

An argument could also be made that Don Giovanni never leaves a woman for having ceased to desire her. "A beautiful woman is always desirable. But he desires another, and no, this is not the same thing" (Camus, 71). This argument is supported by Leporello and Giovanni's exchange in Act II, immediately after our hero has commented on women being as important as bread and air:

"[Leporello:] And yet you have the heart to deceive them all?
[Don Giovanni:] It's all part of love.
If a man keeps faith with one,
he is cruel to all the others;
I, who know myself to be
a man of boundless generosity,
love them every one.
But women, who lack the necessary insight,
call my good nature deception.
[Leporello:] I have never come across
a nature of more generous proportions." (libretto, 143).

Yes, he seduces all the women and leaves them, but he does not revel in leaving them, he avoids confronting them, even when they return to find him. His pleasure is in seducing

them, not in inflicting the cruelty of abandonment upon them. It is the women who arrive together at his villa at the end of Act I and demand an explanation from him, not individuals. All of the illusion(s) that Don Giovanni creates only occurs once, in the distant past, and is continually perpetuated by the women and men of the society around him.

> "Knowledge of the social world has to take into account a practical knowledge of this world which pre-exists it and which it must not fail to include in its object. ...To speak of habitus is to include in the object the knowledge which the agents, who are part of the object, have of the object, and the contribution this knowledge makes to the reality of the object" (Bourdieu, 238).

His reputation precedes him and remains in his wake, thereby spreading the illusion of reality which he requires for the seduction of the group.

This group seduction breaks apart at one locale in the opera, but breaks apart twice at that same place: Don Giovanni's pleasure house. Both Act I and Act II culminate with revelations, or disbeliefs, in our hero's illusions. Musically, the loudest explosions of instruments and voices combine here in the attempt to press Don Giovanni into submission. The fact that the storyline climaxes in the libertine's sanctum sanctorum is by no means happenstance. It is here where multiple realities converge (the "disgraced" women's, the "ruined" men's, and the murdered father, among others) to break into the aristocrat's own reality in an effort to impose their collective wills upon the individual. When the envoy of the aristocratic group, Elvira, fails in her final appeal to Don Giovanni, Leporello, messenger of the lower classes, attempts where she failed, and ultimately, it is the agent of the ruling class, the Stone Guest (in a dual role as father

figure and as a favorite of the king[7]) that succeeds in "seducing" Don Giovanni and pulling him into a new reality, that of hell.

For our hero to be seduced by another, this implies that he break with the self-illusion which he created for himself.

> "Anyone habitually resorting to deceit in the love relationship clearly moves in the narcissistic area of illusions, in which he is omnipotent and dominates reality through a magic control of its elements. The liar inevitably ends up confusing his own deceptions with reality, eventually failing to distinguish between what is true and what is false – which is what ultimately traps him." (Carotenuto, 182).

We have already established that Don Giovanni simulates and deceives his victims, and by integrating them into his reality, he is able to dominate them completely. More precisely, he knows how to control them because it is he who dictates the rules of the seduction, of the game.

In his creation of an alternate reality, Don Giovanni rejects the reality in which his contemporaries function, and thus doing, tries to control another one, which demonstrates his inability to know his own limits. The previous 2,000 women whom Don Giovanni has seduced may have been experiments in testing precisely how far he could push himself. What we see in this opera is simply the end of the line, the transgression of his limits for failure of knowing them in the first place. His relationship to the social world and his proper place in it are never expressed in a clearer manner, than in the space and time in which he feels entitled to take it from others (Bourdieu, 243). The physical space and time in which he executes his seductions are previously established by society, but the moment in which Don Giovanni *chooses* to execute them is the space and time in which he feels it is most appropriate to declare his place in the social world. It is at the

[7] For this, it would be helpful to refer to the original Don Juan text, *El burlador de Sevilla*, in which the character of the Commendatore (Don Gonzalo de Ulloa, "El Comendador") is explicitly mentioned as one of the king's top military advisors.

convergence of these two sets of space and time in which Don Giovanni exists, at which he can be both the creator of his own realities, and a participant in the realities of others.

Our aristocrat interacts in one more important spacio-temporal realm as well, one in which he must ultimately make his most masterful seduction: the theater. The audience members themselves become objects of Don Giovanni's seductive methods and from here arises the concept of participatory-illusion. As viewers of the opera, we become participants in the piece as well. Although we are non-existent to Don Giovanni himself, it does not mean to imply we are not present to other characters, chiefly Leporello. "...Leporello, who mediates, like an Arlecchino figure, between his master's *ataraxia* and the audience" (Ford, 118). He provides a type of conduit from the world on stage to the world of the audience that pulls us into the drama happening on stage, while simultaneously projecting his master out to us by speaking directly to us (e.g. opening aria). By doing this, he breaks the fourth wall of the performance, the imaginary barrier that exists between the actors on stage and the audience seated in the auditorium.

One big obstacle for Don Giovanni's seduction of the audience is eliminated from the outset, because as viewers, we expect to be taken into the work, and accept its conventions in order to find pleasure. Part self-illusion and part participatory-illusion, we do not often sit back and think of the performance as a performance, but rather we accept it as a reality. "Performance kills belief; or rather acknowledging theatricality kills the credibility of the supernatural" (Greenblatt, 602). The term "supernatural" here is not meant to instill images of spirits, ghouls, or other-worldly entities, but rather to express something greater than the quotidian. Giovanni's greatest feat is to convince the audience to feed him attention. He must persuade us to believe in his reality; we are as

much victims of Don Giovanni as Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, and Zerlina are. Our interest in him propels the story even further.

Conclusions

There is something voyeuristic in this opera in particular because it is not simply that we want to see a great seducer in action, but rather we want to see the tragic fall of a character that has been elevated to the status of a mythical figure. If an audience wanted to see a tale of seduction and sexual prowess, why did Mozart and da Ponte not compose an opera based on the first two thousand cases of Don Giovanni's seductions? No, we demand to see something much more interesting, castigation for his ability to create and live in multiple realities simultaneously, something which we deny ourselves outside of the social norms. With the fourth wall ruptured, perhaps more precisely stated as "opened for us" (given that Leporello is the nexus of the two worlds), we are permitted, if not expected, to watch the course of the tragedy, the demise of a great hero, a colossal figure in Western tradition. More than four hundred versions of the Don Giovanni theme have been written since it was first conceptualized on the Iberian Peninsula. He is a phoenix, constantly dying and being reborn by the thoughts of another human being. We are fascinated by how many ways we can create him, just to see what more he is capable of doing, and then punish him for crimes that he commits outside of our field of vision. Like Sisyphus, Don Giovanni is condemned to a life of repetition, but with one exception: we are permitted to see a different emotion of our hero each time he starts anew. Wolfgang A. Mozart and Lorenzo da Ponte simply showed him to us in a manner which draws us into the action, making us such a part of our hero's life, that we feel what he feels; our senses are invited to be aroused through the music, lighting, and poetry of the opera. We are simply the guests at a Baroque artistic feast, and there is nothing wrong in indulging in our pleasures.

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